National Landscape Conservation System Summit

November 16, 2010 Focus Group Sessions

Focus Group 3: Building and Sustaining Partnerships

Note: This document summarizes comments from both BLM employees and non-BLM stakeholders during three focus group sessions held on November 16, 2010. These comments represent neither the consensus opinions of the group attending the session nor the official positions of the BLM.

<u>**Factors Contributing to Successful Partnerships**</u>

Key Elements:
- Hallmark features of successful partnerships include such characteristics as respect, honesty, openness in communication and to change, trust, credibility, flexibility, engagement, enthusiasm, shared values, etc.
- Trust each other; everyone feels honored, valued and respected

Share a Common Vision:
- Partners have jointly defined vision for what they want to achieve
- Shared vision is agreed upon by both parties and is realistic and responsive to interests and needs of all partners
- For meeting that vision, partners are guided by a plan that is regularly evaluated and updated as needs change/opportunities arise

Foster Relationships:
- Focus on building personal relationships and make time for doing so
- Social contact outside of work/professional setting key, .e.g. food and drink/break bread together
- Relationship building as way to achieve vision/work
- Good relationships provide foundation for working well together

Communicate Effectively:
- Communicate, communicate, communicate
- Regular, frequent , open and honest communication critical to building trust, setting expectations and establishing boundaries
- Agree to always discuss differences of opinion
- Face to face communication important; in world of email and increasing technological advances, remain diligent and committed to face to face meetings

Share Values:
- Partners have at least one value in common

Have Clear Roles and Responsibilities:
- Roles and responsibilities of partners and BLM are clear and respected
- Expectations created together are clear and realistic
- Everyone in the partnership takes the responsibility for making the collaboration succeed

Have Engaged/Involved/Motivated Leadership:
- Partnership has strong/directed leadership
- Manager(s) are demonstrably committed to partnership(s)
- Manager(s) provide leadership and take personal interest in partner(s) and members
- Leadership of partner(s) is engaged and readily available to make decisions
- Partner leads show enthusiasm towards the partners and partnership work
  - BLM have right individuals as partnership liaisons (have the willingness/interest and are positive toward partner(s) and work)
- Partner leader(s)/managers and unit staff create culture that provides opportunities for partners to get to know each other on personal level
- NLCS leadership is actively listening to needs of partners, some specific to their individual sites
- Manager(s) ensure availability and foster positive attitude of agency staff
- Continually nurture partnerships and understand the long-term investment

Employ Strategic Thinking/Planning:
- Partner(s) are engaged in joint goal setting and joint strategic planning
- Partner(s) regularly consider the future and position themselves to seize opportunities
- Ask questions and evaluate progress

Engage in Joint Planning and Goal Setting:
- Engage in joint planning of work and projects
- Develop a "shopping list" of ideas that partners can do at each NLCS unit
- Involve partners in planning, early, not just for or during the "on-the-ground" work

Recognize and Celebrate Success:
- Seeing and recognizing accomplishments
- *Reward/recognition of BLM staff who foster and participate in partnerships/volunteerism.*
- Aim for early successes in partnership, and recognize and celebrate with all partners
- BLM needs to continually demonstrate an appreciation towards partners and partnerships
- Celebrations provide opportunities to build personal relationship while recognizing personal and professional achievements
- Acknowledgements readily flow between partners, where each recognizes the contribution of the other

Share Responsibility and Control:
- Willingness of the agency to "let go" and share control/responsibility within partnerships, where appropriate.
- Both sides share control of the direction of the partnership
- Partners each have a responsibility for the collaboration's success
- Must be a commitment to shared responsibility between organizations

Understand Each Other:
- Partners and BLM understand each other and their working opportunities and limitations, e.g., BLM understands non-profit governance, partners understand BLM bureaucracies/limitations and governance structures
- Identify agency/partner strengths and weaknesses and fill voids/build on

- Both sides feeling vested in the relationship; encourage BLM (and volunteers) to carefully study what partners want and need

Manage Partner Organizations Effectively:
- Partner organizations are well managed and use good business practices, nurture leadership skills, think about succession planning and nurturing and transitioning leaders, etc.

Growth Opportunities for Successful Partnerships

Develop Stewardship Opportunities:
- Every NLCS area should develop a list of stewardship opportunities/challenges and use as means to foster collaborative opportunities
- Clearly articulate needs and how they can be filled by partners in a "partner plan," and make available on-line or other appropriate venue(s) so partners can see where they can help
- Adapt a more landscape level view, thinking beyond the boundaries where potential partners and their associated interests and resources exist

Expand/Develop Partnerships Training/Nurture Partnerships:
- Adopt mentoring programs between BLM and partners to nurture and build partnership capacity and peer-to-peer networks
- Provide more training opportunities for partner and BLM staff to participate together
- Provide adequate partnerships/ethics training for BLM staff internally

Target New/Expand Existing Partnerships:
- Nurture partnerships with youth, local interest, retirement, and recreational groups, Baby Boomers, and Boys & Girls clubs, Scouts, schools, colleges/universities underserved groups and native cultures, cities, municipalities, counties, military, etc.
- Identify diversity partnership opportunities and model inclusive partnerships and help promote their implementation locally
- Identify strategies for including all interests including OHV (motorized)
- Tap highly skilled retirees and baby boomers who are looking for new ways to contribute their talents and experience
- Identify/provide opportunities for businesses to partner with BLM
- Foster more partnerships with educational institutions, e.g., schools, colleges, universities, for internship programs

Further Develop Community-Based Partnerships:
- Build and develop local Friends partnerships for all NCAs and other NLCS sites
- Use communities as gateways for some NLCS areas when applicable, enhancing community growth (economic) as well as partnerships
- Better connect/network Friends groups for peer-to-peer sharing
- Use community/common areas to foster partnerships, e.g., museums, libraries, etc.
- Develop youth Friends groups

Foster Networks of Partners:

- Use National Scenic and Historical Trails as connectors between National Monuments, NCAs, Wilderness Areas and Wilderness Study Areas
- Build and further strengthen network of Friends of NLCS units
- Offer more opportunities for our partners to get together/share experiences

Expand Partnerships with Educational and Youth Institutions/Organizations:
- Further develop partnerships for collecting scientific data, through University bird courses and citizen science programs; focus on inventory and monitoring

Communicate Positives of NLCS:
- Building more positive public perception of BLM and NLCS will attract more diverse partnership opportunities
- Communicate what makes NLCS landscapes special
- Develop strategies for using new medias to communicate and develop partnership opportunities

Diversity Funding Resources for Partnership Work:
- Identify diverse sources of funding, i.e., federal (Transportation program $$), state, private, to support NLCS and partnership work

Barriers and Challenges to Developing and Sustaining Successful Partnerships

Cumbersome Bureaucracies/Unclear Guidance//Inconsistent Policy Interpretation:
- Cumbersome bureaucracies, paperwork and record keeping systems
- Confusion on rules and policies for developing and sustaining partnership activities
- Inconsistency of approach to partnerships/policy decisions
- Need better understanding of partnership ethics
- BLM's organizational structure is confusing and hard to understand and navigate for partners
- Inefficient and/or non-compatible networking systems, funding cycles, security, etc. across organizations
- Partner's understanding/confusion of the grants and cooperative agreements process
- A lack of consistent authority across NLCS units exist
- No BLM policy on partnerships in general
- Lack of communication, integration and consistency regarding what offices manage NLCS units. Confusing hierarchy to partners.

Shifting Managers and Priorities:
- A constant movement of managers and shifting priorities
- Annual federal budgets, sometimes unpredictable, can make long term projects/partnerships difficult
- Competing priorities

Insufficient Staff/Support for Partnership and Lack of Skills:
- Limited staff time that can be devoted to building, nurturing and sustaining partnership(s)
- Not supporting partnership
- Insufficient staffing to guide volunteers / staff lack skills/interest/motivation
- Budget and staff time limitations

- No staff that focuses entirely on partnerships, a collateral or add on duty

Proximity to Population Centers:
- Some units are remote, no one knows or cares about them
- Remote sites are difficult to establish and sustain some partnerships at, or make partnering a logistical challenge

Other:
- Personality conflicts can unfavorably impact collaboration/partnership efforts
- Anxiety over conflict
- Self interest creep and personal agendas inhibit genuine collaboration for shared/mutual purpose(s)
- Unwillingness to share control/responsibility in a partnership
- Units can be focused exclusively on their on sites, inhibiting a broader vision for collaborating beyond boundaries
- Not knowing who the "go-to" staff is within NLCS
- Complications regarding mixed land use/ownership and BLM's multi-use mission